

Shiite Connotations on Islamic Artifacts from the Fatimid period (358-567 A.H/ 969-1171 A.D) Preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo

Mohamed N. El Barbary Aisha Al Tohamy Ehab Y. Ali
Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Fayoum University

Abstract

The Fatimid, who were Ismaili Shi'as, ruled to Egypt between (358-567 A.H/ 969-1171 A.D) for about 208 years. They left a lot of artifacts, which are recently preserved in the Museum of Islamic Arts in Cairo, including: wooden memorable Mihrabs (Niches), gravestones, coins, textiles and ceramics. These artifacts have been decorated with written, geometrical, botanical, animal and other patterns, which are mainly influenced by the Shiite doctrine as a part of their plan to promote for Shiism among Egyptians secretly and publicly.

However most of these patterns are common to be used as decorative themes in Islamic Art, they also have Shiite connotations related to the Shiite idea of "Zahir (Obvious) and Batin (Hidden)", referring that every obvious meaning has a hidden meaning. So that, this study aims to illustrate the hidden meanings (connotations) of these patterns, depending on reviewing the literature of Shiite thoughts and beliefs.

KeyWords: Shiite Connotations, Fatimids, Fatimid Arts, Artifacts, Fatimid Ornaments, Zahir and Batin.

Introduction

However most of the related studies were directed to study the influences of the Shiite doctrine on the Fatimid Architecture in Cairo (El-Barbary and Others, 2016); few studies have discussed this theological effect on Fatimid artifacts. A study that was launched by Yassin (2006) highlighted the religious symbolism of some geometrical and botanical Islamic motifs, while AL-Hosseiny (2007) stated only few examples of the Shiite written connotations on some of the Fatimid artifacts preserved at the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo. Therefore, this is considered the first comprehensive and specialized study, which is focusing on studying the Shiite influences on Islamic Fatimid artifacts, especially those preserved in The Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo.

The written connotations

• **Mohamed & Ali "محمد وعلي"**

The names of the prophet "Mohamed" (PBUH) and his cousin "Ali" are inscribed on many Fatimid buildings as well as the Fatimid Artifacts in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, because the Fatimid thought that, "Ali" is the only one who deserves to be the first Caliph after the prophet Mohamed (PBUH) (Al-Qalla, 2013). Therefore, the names of "Mohamed" and "Ali" are carved in simple Kufic, on both sides of a flower decoration at the top recto side of a wooden portable Mihrab**¹³ (pl.1), dates back to (519 A.H/ 1125 A.D) during the reign of Caliph Al-Amir.

• **Ali Walliu Allah "علي ولي الله"**

The sentence "علي ولي الله" (Ali is the guardian of Allah) is a part of the Shiite testimony "لا إله إلا الله" (No God but Allah, Mohamed is the Messenger of Allah and Ali is the guardian of Allah). This sentence is considered the most common theme of the Shiite connotations on the Fatimid artifacts, especially on coins and textiles, because they were

^{13**} Reg. No (15552) - (24 × 13.5) cm.

commonly used by public daily, so that, it was being inscribed on the Fatimid coins made in Egypt since (386 A.H/ 996 A.D) till the end of the Fatimid state in Egypt in (567 A.H/ 1171 A.D) (Al-Bastawisy, 2005). For instance, it is inscribed on the inner frame at the verso side of a golden dinar belonging to Caliph Al-Hakim**¹⁴ (Pl.2), as well as, it is inscribed on the inner frame at the verso side of a golden dinar belonging to Caliph Al-Amir**¹⁵ (Pl.3), and on the middle frames of at the verso sides of two silver dirhams, belong to the last Fatimid Caliph Al-Adid**¹⁶ (Figs.1) (Balog, 1961). Additionally, It is inscribed on too many glass weights of Fatimid coins (Al-Nabarawy, n.d.), of which are two transparent green glass weights**¹⁷, date back to the reign of Caliph Al-Hakim (Pls.4 & 5).

Moreover, the Shiite testimony, “لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله عليّ وليّ الله” (No God but Allah, Mohamed is the Messenger of Allah and Ali is the guardian of Allah), is inscribed on many Fatimid textile pieces. For Instance, it is inscribe on two linen pieces date back to the reign of Caliph Al-Hakim; the first**¹⁸, is decorated with two incomplete horizontal reversed texts in simple Kufic, the upper text begins with the Shiite testimony, then followed by prays, titles and name of Caliph Al-Hakim (Pl.6), while, the second**¹⁹ has one horizontal text only, inscribed with the same words as in the first piece Upper text (Pl.7). Also, there is a marble slab**²⁰ preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, it dates back to (402 A.H/ 1010 A.D) and carved with construction texts inscribed in Thuluth and Kufic scripts on both sides; the text which is inscribed in the Thuluth script, mentions the Shiite testimony and the names of Ali’s sons “Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein” (Pl.8).

- **Afdal Al-Wassyein Wa Wazir Khair Al-Morsalin**

- “أفضل الوصيين ووزير خير المرسلين”

The two titles “أفضل الوصيين ووزير خير المرسلين” (The best of curators and the vizier of the best messenger), were dedicated by Shia to describe El-Imam “Ali Ibn Abi Talib” (Al-Hosseiny, 2007). These title are commonly inscribed on coins; For instance, they are inscribed on the outer frame at the verso side of a unique golden dinar belonging to Caliph Al-Moez**²¹ (Pl.9). Moreover, they are inscribed on the inner frame at the verso side of a golden dinar belonging to Caliph Al-Mustansir Billah**²² (Pl.10) and dates back to (444 A.H/ 1052 A.D).

- **Al-Molk Lillah “المُلك لله”**

The Arabic sentence “المُلك لله” (The dominion is for Allah), is a common written Shiite connotation, especially, on Fatimid textiles, because it is believed that, the ring of El-Imam “Ali Ibn Abi Talib” was carved with it (Othman, 2013). It is inscribed on many Fatimid textile pieces, For Instance, there is a linen piece**²³, which is made in Damietta and dates back to

¹⁴** Reg. No (1461/10).

¹⁵** Reg. No (17101).

¹⁶** Reg. No (21971 and 22031).

¹⁷** Reg. No (14292/137 and 6365/29).

¹⁸** Reg. No (8264).

¹⁹** Reg. No (14530).

²⁰** Reg. No (11301).

²¹** Reg. No (24547), it is considered the oldest example of these titles on Fatimid artifacts. However the Fatimid rule to Egypt had begun in (358A.H/969A.D), it is mentioned that it was made in Egypt in (341A.H/952A.D), as Fatimid promoted for the Shiite doctrine before there invasion to Egypt (Al-Bastawisy, 2005).

²²** Reg. No (18376)

²³** Reg. No. (13015)

(387A.H/988A.D), decorated with Upper and Lower reversed texts, flanking the middle line, which is decorated with paintings of birds, could be read as “Al-Molk Lillah” repeated in Simple Kufic Script (Pl.11). Additionally, this sentence is carved repeatedly around the wooden decorations as hexagonal stars on one side of El-Imam “Al-Hussein wooden coffin, which is preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo**²⁴ (Pl.12). Furthermore, the Museum displays a rectangular wooden amulet**²⁵, inscribed with the Arabic sentence of “Al-Molk Lillah” in simple Kufic script on one side (Pl.13), while the other side is free of any decoration (Eleiw, 2015). Finally, the wooden façade of a cupboard, that was being used as a book store in the mosque of “Al-Salih Tala’ia” in Cairo and now preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo**²⁶, is inscribed with different repeated texts on black grounds, of which is the sentence of “Al-Molk Lillah” (Pl.14).

- **Hasbuna Allah Waniem Al-Wakil “حسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل”**

The Arabic sentence “حسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل” (Allah is Our Sufficient and He is The Best Agent), was widely used by Fatimid at the end of their speech, because “Ali Ibn Abi Talib” get used to end his speech by this sentence too (Al-Hosseiny, 2007). So that, it was inscribed on many Fatimid buildings, as well as, on some Fatimid artifacts preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo; for instance, it is inscribed on a Silver ring inlaid with Cornelian, dates back to the (4th century A.H/ 10th century A.D)**²⁷ (Pl.15) and it is inscribed in three reversed lines on another golden ring (Pl.16), dates back to the (5th century A.H/11th century A.D)**²⁸ (Eleiw, 2015).

- **Names of Sons and Descendants Imams of Ali Ibn Abi Talib**

It was mentioned by Stern (1951) that, by the help of “Abu Ali Ibn Al-Afdal” the vizier of Caliph Al-Hafiz in (526A.H/ 1132 A.D), the Twelver Shiite doctrine started to be common in Egypt and replaced the Ismaili doctrine of Fatimid, however, the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, houses a wooden portable Mihrab**²⁹, dates back to the reign of Caliph Al-Amir (495-525 A.H/ 1101-1130 A.D); its outer frame at the recto side is carved with the names of the Twelver Shiite Imams**³⁰ (Pl.1), ensuring that, the Twelver Shiite doctrine became common in Egypt prior to the reign of Caliph Al-Hafiz and his vizier “Abu Ali”. Moreover, the names of the Twelver Shiite Imams are inscribed on the outer frame of another Fatimid portable Mihrab, preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo**³¹ (Pl.17). Furthermore, the names of “Fatima Azahra”, Ali’s wife, and the Twelver Shiite Imams are inscribed on a rectangular amulet**³² (Pl.18), made of Cooper and dates back to the end of the Fatimid period (Eleiw, 2015).

Additionally, the names of Ali’s sons; “Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein” are inscribed after the Shiite testimony, as a part of the construction texts inscribed in Thuluth on the verso side of a marble

²⁴** Reg. No. (15025), it was moved from Mausoleum of El-Imam Al-Hussein in Cairo to the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo

²⁵** Reg. No. (14981), its dimensions are (10×4×1.5) cm.

²⁶** Reg. No. (672)

²⁷** Reg. No. (39291)

²⁸** Reg. No. (24266)

²⁹** Reg. No. (15552).

³⁰** The Twelver Shiite Imams are: (Mohamed, Ali, Al-Hassan, Al-Hussein, Ali, Mohamed, Jaafar, Moses, Ali, Mohamed, Ali and Al-Hassan).

³¹** Reg. No. (8464)

³²** Reg. No. (15375)

slab**³³ dates back to (402 A.H/ 1010A.D) (Pl.8), also, the name of “Asayieda Roqaiya”, the daughter of Ali Ibn Abi Talib, is inscribed over the arch of her Portable wooden Mihrab, which was moved from her Mausoleum in Cairo to the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo**³⁴ (Pl.19).

• Verses of The Holy Quran

Unlike Sunnis, the Fatimids had their own interpretation of many verses of the holy Quran, which they based on as evidences to prove their rights in Imamate, according to their beliefs and thoughts; so that, they inscribed it on their buildings and artifacts, Intentionally. For instance, Shiite thought that the term “*Ahlulbait*”, which is mentioned in the holy verse: “*And abide in your houses and do not display yourselves as (was) the display of the former times of ignorance. And establish prayer and give zakat and obey Allah and His Messenger Allah intends only to remove from you the impurity (of sin), O Ahlulbait and to purify you with (extensive) purification*” (Al-Ahzab: 33, Holy Quran), refers to (the prophet Mohamed (PBUH), his daughter Fatima, her husband Ali Ibn Abi Talib, Al Hassan and Al Hussein sons of Ali & Fatima) who are impeccable (Williams, 1983), therefore, the holy verse is inscribed on a wooden arch of a window**³⁵, that is thought to be a part of the restorations of Caliph Al-Hafiz to the mausoleum of “Asayieda Nafisa” in Cairo (Williams, 1985) (Pl.20), it is also inscribed in a low relief on the recto side of a rectangular amulet made of Cooper**³⁶ (Pl.18), dates back to the end of the Fatimid period (Eleiw, 2015), in addition, the term “*Ahlulbait*” is also mentioned in the holy verse: “*They said, Are you amazed at the decree of Allah?! May the mercy of Allah and His blessings be upon you Ahlulbait Indeed, He is Praiseworthy and Honorable*” (Hud: 73, Holy Quran), both verses are inscribed on the wooden coffin of El-Imam Al-Hussein, which is preserved now in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo**³⁷ (Pl.12).

Fatimids also believed that, the term “Wali” (Ally) mentioned in the holy verse: “*Your ally is none but Allah and [therefore] His Messenger and those who have believed - those who establish prayer and give zakat, and they bow [in worship]*” (Al-Ma’ida: 55, Holy Quran), refers to El-Imam “Ali”; because he was the only one who gave Zakat (Alms), while he was bowing in worship (Bloom, 1983; Shaker, 2002). So that, it is inscribed in a low relief on the recto side of a rectangular amulet made of Cooper**³⁸ (Pl.18), dates back to the end of the Fatimid period (Eleiw, 2015).

Additionally, Fatimids thought that, the term “Those of Knowledge” mentioned in the holy verse: “*Allah witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge - [that He is] maintaining [creation] in justice. There is no deity except Him, the Exalted in Might, the Wise*” (Al-’Imran: 18, Holy Quran), refers to “Ali Ibn Abi Talib” and his descendant Imams including the Fatimid Imams (Anan, 1983), so that, the holy verse is inscribed on one side of a marble panel with four sides**³⁹, which dates back to the (6th century A.H/ 12 century A.D) and was moved from the Fatimid Caliph’s cemetery to the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo (Pl.21).

³³** Reg. No (11301).

³⁴** Reg. No. (446)

³⁵** Reg. No. (1655)

³⁶** Reg. No. (15375)

³⁷** Reg. No. (15025), it was moved from Mausoleum of El-Imam Al-Hussein in Cairo to the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo

³⁸** Reg. No. (15375)

³⁹** Reg. No. (29)

The holy verse: *“It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion, although they who associate others with Allah dislike it”* (At-Tawbah: 33, Holy Quran), is commonly inscribed on the outer frames of the Fatimid coins, because Fatimids believed that, the term “Guidance” refers to the Shiite doctrine and the Imamate of “Ali” (Al-Hosseiny, 1986), for instance, it is inscribed on the outer frame at the verso side of a golden dinar**⁴⁰ (Fig.2), belongs to Caliph “Ubaidullah Al-Mahdi” and dates back to (300 A.H/912 A.D) (Al-Bastawisy, 2005).

Moreover, Fatimids thought that, the term “The Most Trustworthy Handhold” mentioned in the holy verse: *“There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing”* (Al-Baqarah: 256, Holy Quran), refers to the “Wilayah” (Guardianship) of El-Imam Ali and his descendant Imams (Al-Moaez-ldinellah, 2006), so that, the holy verse is inscribed on the outer frame of the portable wooden Mihrab of “Asayyeda Roqaiyah”**⁴¹, which has been moved to the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo (Pl.19).

Furthermore, the holy verse: *“Indeed, Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties [in exchange] for that they will have Paradise. They fight in the cause of Allah, so they kill and are killed. [It is] a true promise [binding] upon Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'an. And who is truer to his covenant than Allah? So rejoice in your transaction which you have contracted. And it is that, which is the great attainment”* (At-Tawbah: 111, Holy Quran), which Fatimids believed that, it refers to the martyrdom of El-Imam Al-Hussein (Al-Pasha, 1970) is inscribed on a stucco window (Pl.22), that was moved from the mosque of “Al-Salih Tala’i” to the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo**⁴².

Finally, the holy verse: *“And [you will obtain] another [favor] that you love - victory from Allah and an imminent conquest; and give good tidings to the believers”* (As-Saf: 13, Holy Quran) is one of the most repeated holy verses in the Fatimid construction texts on buildings and textiles, because Fatimids interpreted this holy verse as a promise of victory from Allah over their enemies; the Abbasids (Marzoq, 1942), for instance, it is mentioned in the second line of the construction text on a piece of Silk**⁴³, dates back to (425-427 A.H/ 1034-1036 A.D) (Pl.23), and on the wooden coffin of El-Imam Al-Hussein (Pl.12), preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo**⁴⁴.

The Geometrical Connotations

• The Hexagonal Star

According to the Shiite thoughts of “Zahir” (The obvious Meaning) and “Batin” (The Hidden Meaning), the hexagonal star consists of two triangular; the base of first is upwards to the sky and in this case it represents “Zahir” who is the Prophet Mohamed, while the base of the second, which is downwards to the earth represents “Batin” who is El-Imam “Ali” (Al-Gabalawy, 2009; Morsi, 2002), so that, the hexagonal was carved on many Fatimid buildings and artifacts. For instance, Creswell (2004) stated that, the portable wooden Mihrab, which was made by Caliph Al-Hafiz for the mausoleum of “Asayyeda Nafisa” (Pl.24) and now preserved in the Museum of

⁴⁰** Reg. No. (17079/1)

⁴¹** Reg. No. (446)

⁴²** Reg. No. (2388)

⁴³** Reg. No. (14039)

⁴⁴** Reg. No. (15025)

Islamic Art in Cairo**⁴⁵, once had a hexagonal star carved directly over the Arch of the Mihrab, but it is missing now. In addition, there is another wooden portable Mihrab in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo**⁴⁶, which is carved on the recto side with a hexagonal star surrounded by a frame of botanical motifs (Pl.1), the hexagonal star is also represented repeatedly, on one of El-Imam Al-Hussein wooden coffin sides**⁴⁷ (Pl.12).

Additionally, there is a unique silver Dirham preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, belongs to Caliph Al-Hakim**⁴⁸, it's recto side is carved with a hexagonal star and six words in simple Kufic script distributed on the six points of the star, could be read as following: "El-Imam, Abu-Ali, Al-Mansour, Al-Hakim, Emir, Al-Mo'mnein (Believers)" (Pl.25). Also, the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo exhibits a ceramic plate with metallic luster**⁴⁹, dates back to the Fatimid era, and its central part is painted with a bird inside a hexagonal star (Pl.26). Moreover, there is a hexagonal star made of Ivory in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo**⁵⁰; it is carved on its top with a seated man holding a cup, flanked by two standing men and there is a representation of two opposite mythical animals (Pl.27). Finally, the Fatimid Jewelry collection in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, includes a golden earring as a hexagonal star**⁵¹ (Pl.28), which dates back to the (5th century A.H/ 11century A.D) (Hassan, 1981).

• **The Closed Door**

The closed door decoration according to the Fatimid thoughts, represents El-Imam "Ali Ibn Abi Talib", who was described as the door of the knowledge city in the prophetic tradition: "*I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its door*" (Maged, 1994; Al-Hosseiny, 1986), or, it refers to the secrets of the holy Quran which nobody know it except for "Ali" (Williams, 1983), so that, it is represented on the wooden door made by Caliph Al-Hakim for Al-Azhar mosque (Pl.29) and now is preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo**⁵².

The Botanical Connotations

• **The Tree of Life**

The tree of life is always depicted as a palm tree flanked by two men who are throwing pollen on it to enhance the quality of its fruits, it had a magical and medical symbolism in the Assyrian and Persian arts (Hassan, 2014; Maher, 1987). However, Fatimids believed that its trunk refers to "Ali Ibn Abi Talib", its branch refers to Ali's wife; "Asayyeda Fatima Azahra", while, the two men on both sides represent "Al-Hassan and "Al-Hussein" who are throwing pollen on its fruits, which may refer to Shia Imams (El-Barbary and Others, 2016). So that, the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo houses a piece of Linen**⁵³, which was made in Damietta in (387A.H/997A.D) and it has three decorative lines; the middle is decorated with trees of life between each two opposite birds (Pl.11). The tree of life is also depicted between two opposite birds with human heads on a ceramic plate with metallic luster (Pl.30), preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo**⁵⁴.

⁴⁵** Reg. No. (421)

⁴⁶** Reg. No. (15552)

⁴⁷** Reg. No. (15025)

⁴⁸** Reg. No. (4384/1)

⁴⁹** Reg. No. (14931)

⁵⁰** Reg. No. (15622)

⁵¹** Reg. No. (9450)

⁵²** Reg. No. (551)

⁵³** Reg. No. (13015)

⁵⁴** Reg. No. (14467)

The Animal Connotations

• The Rabbit

Despite rabbits were the main sacred animals for the opponents of Fatimids; the Twelver Shia, who thought that rabbits accompanied the twelfth absent Imam; Al-Mahdi (Al-Qafari, 1994), it is also considered the most common animal patterns to be depicted on the Fatimid artifacts; and unfortunately, there is no definite interpretation for this till now.

However, by reviewing most of the rabbit's representation on the Fatimid artifacts, we concluded that, there are two main positions of the rabbit's representation on the Fatimid artifacts, that could be dated back to two different periods of the Fatimid rule to Egypt; firstly, the Fatimid artifacts which are depicting a predator animals, such as lions or birds such as eagles attacking a rabbit, could be dated back to the first half of the Fatimid rule to Egypt between (358-457 A.H/ 969-1064 A.D), when the Ismaili Fatimid doctrine was the predominant glorious doctrine in Egypt (Maged, 1994), in this position, the predator animal or bird may represents the powerful Ismaili Fatimid doctrine while defeating the Twelver Shiite doctrine, which is represented as a rabbit. Similarly, the Norman documented their victory over the Arab on a piece of the garment of King "Rogers II"⁵⁵ of Sicily Island, as a lion attacking a camel (Pl.31). There are also many Fatimid artifacts in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, which are depicted with this position. For instance, an eagle is depicted attacking a rabbit on a piece of Cotton (Pl.32), dates back to the beginnings (5th century A.H/ 11th Century A.D) ⁵⁶.

Secondly, the Fatimid artifacts which are depicting rabbits in a peaceful view; eating grape leaves as expressions of optimism and good luck according to the Twelver Shiite thoughts (Dodd, 1972), could be dated back to the second half of the Fatimid rule to Egypt between (457-567 A.H/ 1064-1171 A.D), when the Twelver Shiite doctrine became the dominant in Egypt (Stern, 1951). There are many Fatimid artifacts in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, which are depicted with this position. For Instance, there is a Fatimid ceramic plate with metallic luster⁵⁷, which is depicted with three white rabbits inside three circles and eating grape leaves (Pl.33), as well as, there is a piece of Linen in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo⁵⁸, on which is a representation of white rabbits on black background inside circles and eating grape leaves (Pl.34).

• The Ram Head

The Fatimids believed in occultism, therefore, they thought that the ram head has a magical power that could prevent any evils; they also connected it to "Mars"; the unconquerable planet (Gabr, 1999). So that, the Fatimids hanged amulets as ram heads on the doors of their houses (Eleiw, 2015), such as the Fatimid amulet as a ram head, preserved in the Museum of Islamic Arts in Cairo⁵⁹, it is made of dark pottery (Pl.35) and was found during the excavations of Al-Fustat city.

• The Snake

Fatimids thought that, the Snake amulets could prevent the evil spirits and healing the diseases, so that, the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo houses a small statue as an amulet for a woman in

⁵⁵** preserved in Vienna Museum of Art History, Reg. No. (1133/34)

⁵⁶** Reg. No. (10836)

⁵⁷** Reg. No. (16442)

⁵⁸** Reg. No. (4230)

⁵⁹** Reg. No. (18750)

the seating position**⁶⁰ (4.5× 2.5 cm), dates back to the (5th century A.H/ 11th century A.D), it is made of transparent green glass and there are representations of two hair locks as snakes (Pl.36) (Eleiw, 2015). In addition, there is a neck of water jug preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo**⁶¹, made of pottery and carved with a representation of a horned viper (Pl.37).

The discontinuous Arabic Alphabets Connotations

The discontinuous Arabic letters, according to the Shiite thoughts, are related to a mysterious science called “Al-Jifr”, which nobody could know it except for the Fatimid Imams. In this science, each Arabic letter has a symbolic hidden value, which could be used to describe the site of a place, refers to the initial letters of persons or important events such as a victory (Yassin, 2006). The Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo houses a golden dinar belongs to Caliph Al-Hakim**⁶², its inner frame on the recto side is inscribed with discontinuous Arabic letters, which don't make any sense (Pl.38); of these letters are (ع) and (م) which may refer to the initial letters of the Arabic names of the Prophet “Mohamed” and his cousin “Ali Ibn Abi Talib” (Dawood, 1991).

The Portable Wooden Mihrab Connotation

Fatimids get used to put small portable wooden Mihrabs under their forehead while praying and some of them hanged it in their necks as amulets (O'kane, 2006); they made it from the sacred soil of “Karbala” city in Iraq, because they thought that, all the earth is impure except for “Karbala” soil, where El-Imam Al-Hussein was martyred (Dawood, 1991). Also, they decorated them with Shiite inscriptions and motifs devoted for “Ahlulbait”, the Shiite Imams and Caliphs, such as the oldest portable wooden Mihrab, which was dedicated by Caliph Al-Hakim in (442 A.H/ 1055 A.D) for the mosque of Amr Ibn Al-Aas, but it is missing now (Abdelwahab, 1965). However, the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo houses two Fatimid wooden portable Mihrabs, which are inscribed on its outer frame with the names of the Twelver Shiite Imams; the first**⁶³(Pl.39), was found in Al-Fustat (18×9.5cm), while the second**⁶⁴ (Pl.1) dates back to the reign of Caliph Al-Amir (495- 525 A.H/ 1101-1130 A.D).

Conclusion

In conclusion, we should take in consideration, the jurisprudential and doctrinal dimensions while studying the Fatimid artifact, because the Fatimid artifacts were greatly influenced by the Ismaili Shiite doctrine. However, most of the decorations on these artifacts look common to Sunnis, but in fact; they have hidden Shiite connotations according to the idea of “Zahir” and “Batin”. Moreover, Fatimids intended to inscribe the direct Shiite connotations such as: (“علي وليّ الله”) Ali is the guardian of Allah), on coins and textiles especially, because they were commonly used by local people in Egypt.

⁶⁰** Reg. No. (13717)

⁶¹** Reg. No. (7282/1)

⁶²** Reg. No. (16674/1)

⁶³** Reg. No. (14445)

⁶⁴** Reg. No. (15552).

Bibliography

Resources

The Holy Quran

Arabic References

- Abdelwahab, H. (1965) “*Āl-Āṭār Āl-fāṭimīyā bayn tūnīs w Āl-qāhīrā*” The Fatimid Monuments between Cairo and Tunisia, In *Proceedings of the 4th conference of Arab monuments, Tunisia*, May 18-29, 1963, Authoring committee, Cairo, pp.359-420.
- Al-Bastawisy, M. A. (2005) “*Āl-kītābāt Āl-arabiā alā Ānqūd w Āl-tūḤaf Āl-fāṭimīyā fī mīṣr*” The Arabic writings on the Fatimid coins and artefacts in Egypt, MSc Thesis, Faculty of Archaeology, Cairo University.
- Al-Gabalawy, K. M. (2009) “*Moūsoaat Āl-Āfkār Ārramzyiā B Āl-aīmārā Āl- maṣriyā baad dḥoūl Āl-īslām*” The Encyclopedia of symbolic thoughts in the Egyptian architecture after Arab conquest, N.P., Cairo.
- Al-Hosseiny, F. H. (2007) “*Ānqūš Āl-kītābiyā Āl-fāṭimīyā alā Āl-amā ʾr fī mīṣr*” The Fatimid Written Inscriptions on Egypt’s Architecture, Bibliotheca of Alexandria press, Egypt.
- Al-Hosseiny, S. (1986) “*tā ʾweel Āl- Āyāt Āzāhīrā fī fdā ʾl Āl-aītrā Āṭāhīrā*” The Interpretation of Obvious Verses in the Grace of the Pure Srain, School of El-Imam El-Mahdi Press, Iran.
- Al-Moaez-Idinellah (2006) “*Ādaiat Āl-Āyām Āssabaā*” Prayers of the Seven Days, detc. I. Qorban, Dar Āl-ḡarb Āl-īslāmī, Beirut.
- Al-Nabarawy, R. M. (n.d.) “*Āṣinag Āzogāḡiyā Lelsakā Āl-fāṭimīyā Āl-Maḥfoūzā B-maḥaf Āl-Fan Āl-īslāmī B-lqāhīrā*” The Glass Weights of Fatimid Coins Preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, Zahrā’ Āsharq, Cairo.
- Al-Pasha, H. (1970) “*Āl-qāhīrā: Tāriḥuhā Fnoūnhā Ātarhā*” Cairo: its History, Arts and Monuments, Al-Ahram Atogariya, Cairo.
- Al-Qafari, N. (1994) “*Oṣoūl Mazhab Āṣṯiāā Āl-īmāmīyā Āl-īṭnā Āṣrīyā*” The Basics of the Twelver Shiite Doctrine, PhD Thesis, Vol.1, El-Imam Mohamed Ibn Soūd Āl-īslāmīyā University, K.S.A.
- Al-Qalla, I. A. (2013) “*wsā ʾl Āl-daāīā and Āl-fāṭimīyēn*” The Fatimid Methods of Propaganda (358-567 A.H/969-1171 A.D), In *Āl-Mūʾrriḥ Āl-aarabī*, Vol. 21, Cairo, pp.125-168.
- Anan, M. A. (1983) “*Āl-ḥākīm bī ʾamr-ellāh w Āsrār Āddaawā Āl-fāṭimīyā*” Al-Hakim B ʾamr-ellah and the Secrets of the Fatimid Call, 3rd ed., Dar Āl-Madani, Cairo.
- Creswell, K. A. C. (2004) “*Āl-aīmārā Āl-īslāmīyā fī Mīṣr*” Islamic Architecture in Egypt, Vol. 1, trans. A. Alloub, Zahrā’ Āl- Ṣarq & Al-Qahira Press, Cairo.
- Dawood, M. (1991) “*Āl-Maskoūkāt Āl-fāṭimīyā B-majmoūat Maḥaf Āl-Fan Āl-īslāmī B-lqāhīrā*” The Fatimid Coins Group in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo: An Artistic and Archaeological Study, Dar Al-Fikr Al-Arabi, Cairo.
- El-Barbary, M. N., Al Tohamy, A. and Ali, E. Y. (March 2016) “*Shiite Connotations on Islamic Architecture in Cairo in the Fatimid Era (358-567 A.H/ 969-1171 A.D)*, In *Journal of Tourism and Hotels*, Fayoum Univ., Vol. (10), No (1/2), Pp.270-299.
- Eleiw, A. (2015) “*Majmoūat Ātmā ʾim w Āl-Āḥjībā Āl-Maḥfoūzā B-maḥaf Āl-Fan Āl-īslāmī B-lqāhīrā*” The Amulets and Spells Group preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo: An Artistic and Archaeological Study, MSc Thesis, Faculty of Arts, Ain Shams University.

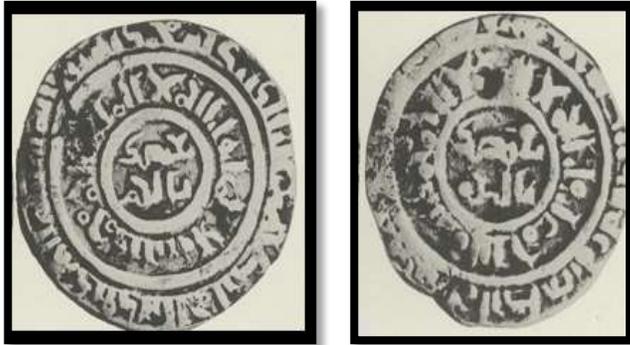
- Gabr, A. (1999) “*Ātt ʿir Āshiai alā Āl-fan Āl-māmārī Āl-fāṭimī*” *Shiite Effect on the Fatimid Architectural Art*, In *aālam Āl-Bīnā*, Vol. 213, The Center of Cultural and Architectural Studies, Cairo, pp.10-15.
- Hassan, Z. M. (1981) “*Āṭlas Āl-Fnoūn Āzohrofiyā W Āṭṣawīr Āl-īslāmīyā*” *Atlas of the Decorative Arts and Islamic Pictures*, Dār Āraʿīd, Beirut, Lebanon.
- Hassan, Z. M. (2014) “*fī Āl-fnoūn Āl-īslāmīyā*” *In the Islamic arts*, Hindāwī Organization Press, Cairo. (1938)
- Maged, A. (1994) “*zhoūr Āl-hīlāfā Āl-fāṭimīyā w sqoūṭhā fī mīsr*” *The Appearance and Fall of the Fatimid State in Egypt*, 4th ed., Dār Āl-Fīkr Āl-aarabī, Cairo.
- Maher, S. (1987) “*Oṣṭourat šagarat Āl-ḥayā W Āl-ḥadārā Āl-īslāmīyā*” *The Tree of Life Legend and the Islamic Civilization*, In *The Golden Book of the 50th Annual Celebration of the Archaeological Studies*, Vol.1, Cairo.
- Marzoq, M. A. (1942) “*Āzahrafā Āl-Mansouḡā Fī Āl-Āqmīšā Āl-fāṭimīyā*” *The Woven Motifs in the Fatimid Textiles*, Dār Āl-Kotob Āl-Maṣrīyā, Cairo.
- Morsi, M. (2002) “*Āl-amā ʿir Āl-īslāmīyā Ādīnīyā W Āl-Madanīyā Āl-Baqīā Fī Madīnat Dīmašq ḥīlāl Āl-ahdeīn Āzīnkī W Āl-Āyyubī*” *The Remaining Religious and Secular Islamic Architecture in Damascus During the Zinky and Ayyubid Eras*, MSc, Faculty of Archaeology, Cairo Univ.
- Othman, M. A. (2013) “*Āḍoūa ʿjadīdā ala Āl-kūṭābāt fī Āl-Āṭar Āl-īslāmīyā*” *New Highlights on Writings of Islamic Monuments*, In *Mqāleīd*, Vol. 6, The K.S.A Consulate in France Press, pp.197-230.
- Shaker, M. (2002) “*Āl-loūḥā Ātārīḥīyā Lejāmīa Āl-Ānwar*” *the Historical panel of Al-Anwar Mosque*, Graphico Printing Ltd., London.
- Yassin, A. (2006) “*Āramzīyā Ādīnīyā fī Āzahrafā Āl-īslāmīyā*” *The Religious Symbolic in Islamic Motifs*, Zahrā ʿĀsarq, Cairo.

Foreign References

- Balog, P. (1961) “*Notes on Some Fatimid Round-Flan Dirhams*”, In *The Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Royal Numismatic Society*, 7th series, Vol.1, Royal Numismatic Society Pub., Pp.177-178.
- Bloom, J. (1983) “*The mosque of al-Hākīm in Cairo*”, In *Muqarnas*, Vol. 1, Yale University Press, U.S.A, pp.15-36.
- Dodd, E. (1972) “*On a Bronze Rabbit from Fatimid Egypt*”, In *Kunst des Orients*, Franz Steiner Verlag, Vol.8, pp.60-76.
- O’Kane, B. (2006) “*The Treasures of Islamic Art in the Museum of Cairo*”, the American university in Cairo press, Cairo.
- Stern, S. M. (1951) “*The Succession to the Fatimid Imam Al-Amir*”, In *Oriens*, Brill, London, Vol.4, No 2, Pp.193-255.
- Williams, C. (1983) “*The cult of ʿAlid Saints in The Fatimid Monuments of Cairo Part I: The Mosque of Al-Aqmar*”, In *Muqarnas*, Vol. 1, Brill, Yale University Press, pp.37-52.
- Williams, C. (1985) “*The Cult of ʿAlid Saints in the Fatimid Monuments of Cairo Part II: The Mausolea*”, In *Muqarnas*, Vol.3, Brill, pp.39-60

Figures

Figure 1: A Silver dirham of Caliph Al-Adid (Reg. Nos: 21971 and 22031).



(After: Balog)

Figure 2: A golden dinar of Caliph "Al-Mahdi" (Reg. No. 17079/1).



(After: Al-Bastawisy)

Plates

Plate 1: A wooden portable Mihrab from the reign of Caliph Al-Amir (Reg. No: 15552).



(The Researchers)

Plate 2: A golden dinar of Caliph Al-Hakim (Reg. No: 1461/10).



(The Museum data base)

Plate 3: A golden dinar of Caliph Al-Amir (Reg. No: 17101).



(The Researchers)

Plate 4: A Transparent green glass weight of Caliph Al-Hakim (Reg. No: 14292/137)



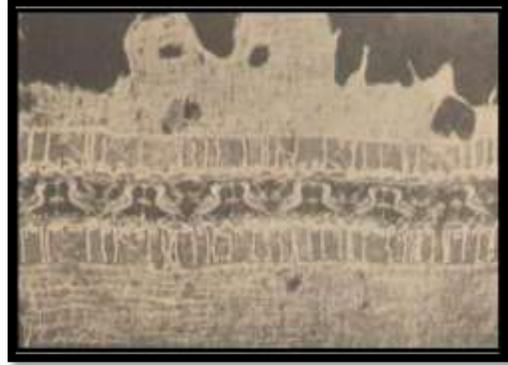
(The Researchers)

Plate 5: A Transparent green glass weight of Caliph Al-Hakim (Reg. No: 6365/29)



(The Researchers)

Plate 6: A Linen piece of Caliph Al-Hakim (Reg. No: 8264).



(The Museum Data Base)

Plate 7: A Linen piece of Caliph Al-Hakim (Reg. No: 14530).



(The Researchers)

Plate 8: A Marble slab dates back to (402 A.H/ 1010A.D) (Reg. No: 11301).



(After: Al Hosseiny, F.)

Plate 9: A Golden dinar of Caliph Al-Moez (Reg. No: 24547).



(The Museum Data Base)

Plate 10: A Golden dinar of Caliph Al-Mustansir (Reg. No: 18376).



(The Researchers)

Plate 11: A Linen piece dates back to (387A.H/988A.D), inscribed with “Al-Molk Lillah” (Reg. No: 13015).



(The Museum Data Base)

Plate 12: A Side of the wooden coffin of El-Imam “Al-Hussein (Reg. No: 15025).



(The Museum Data Base)

Plate 13: A Wooden amulet inscribed with “Al-Molk Lillah” (Reg. No: 14981).



(After: Eleiw)

Plate 14: A Wooden façade of a cupboard from “Al-Salih Tala’i” mosque (Reg. No: 672).



(The Museum Data Base)

Plate 15: A Silver ring inlaid with Cornelian (Reg. No: 39291).



(After: Eleiw)

- Plate 16: A Golden ring inscribed with Hasbuna Allah (Reg. No: 24266).



(After: Eleiw)

Plate 17: A Fatimid wooden portable Mihrab inscribed with the Twelver Shiite Imams' names (Reg. No: 8464).



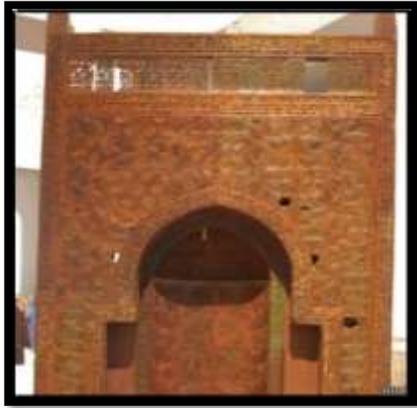
(The Museum Data Base)

Plate 18: A Rectangular amulet made of Cooper, dates back to the end of the Fatimid period (Reg. No: 15375).



(After: Eleiw)

Plate 19: The wooden portable Mihrab of "Asayieda Roqaiya" (Reg. No: 446).



(The Museum Data Base)

Plate 20: A wooden arch of a window from the mausoleum of "Asayieda Nafisa" (Reg. No: 1655).



(The Researchers)

Plate 21: A marble panel from the Fatimid Caliph's cemetery (Reg. No: 29).



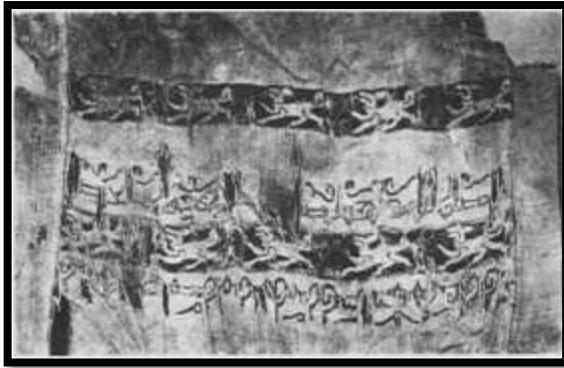
(The Museum Data Base)

Plate 22: A stucco window from "Al-Salih Tala'i" mosque (Reg. No: 2388).



(The Researchers)

Plate 23: A piece of Silk inscribed with the holy Quran verse (As-Saf: 13) (Reg. No: 14039).



(The Museum Data Base)

Plate 24: The wooden Mihrab of "Asayyeda Nafisa" (Reg. No: 421).



(The Museum Data Base)

Plate 25: A hexagonal star on a silver dirham of Caliph Al-Hakim (Reg. No: 4384/1)



(The Museum Data Base)

Plate 26: A hexagonal star on a Fatimid ceramic plate with metallic luster (Reg. No: 14931)



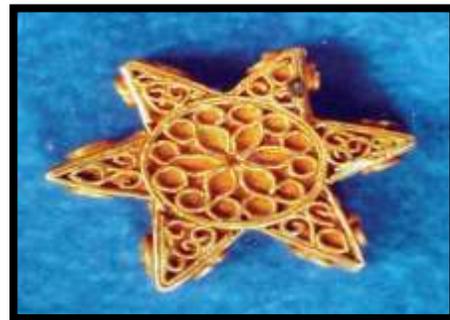
(The Museum Data Base)

Plate 27: A hexagonal star made of Ivory (Reg. No: 15622)



(The Museum Data Base)

Plate 28: A Fatimid golden earring as a hexagonal star (Reg. No: 15622)



(The Museum Data Base)

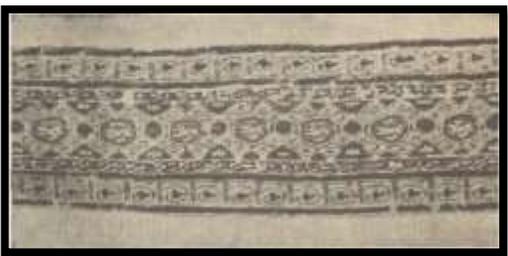
<p>Plate 29: The wooden door made by Caliph Al-Hakim for Al-Azhar mosque (Reg. No: 551).</p>  <p>(The Museum Data Base)</p>	<p>Plate 30: The tree of life on a Fatimid ceramic plate with metallic luster (Reg. No: 14467). .</p>  <p>(The Museum Data Base)</p>
<p>Plate 31: A piece of King's "Rogers II garment in Vienna Museum of Art History Reg. No: 1133/34)</p>  <p>(www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public)</p>	<p>Plate 32: An eagle is attacking a rabbit on a piece of Cotton (Reg. No: 10836)</p>  <p>(The Museum Data Base)</p>
<p>Plate 33: Three white rabbits eating grape leaves on a Fatimid ceramic plate with metallic luster (Reg. No: 16442)</p>  <p>(The Museum Data Base)</p>	<p>Plate 34: White rabbits eating grape leaves on a Fatimid piece of Linen (Reg. No: 4230).</p>  <p>(The Researchers)</p>
<p>Plate 35: A Fatimid amulet as ram head (Reg. No: 18750)</p>  <p>(After: Eleiw)</p>	<p>Plate 36: An amulet as a woman with two hair locks as snakes (Reg. No: 13717)</p>  <p>(After: Eleiw)</p>

Plate 37: A horned viper on a Fatimid neck of water jug (Reg. No: 7282/1)



(The Researchers)

Plate 38: Discontinuous Arabic letters on a golden dinar of Caliph Al-Hakim (Reg. No: 16674/1)



(The Researchers)

Plate 39: A Fatimid wooden portable Mihrab inscribed with the names of the Twelver Shiite Imams (Reg. No: 14445)



(The Museum Data Base)